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SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST TURKEY PRESS SUMMARY FOR JUNE 21, 2006

This is the Southeastern Turkey press summary for June 21, 2006.

Please note that Turkish press reports often contain errors or exaggerations; AmConsulate Adana does not vouch for the accuracy of the reports summarized here.

POLITICAL, SECURITY, HUMAN RIGHTS

RADIKAL / HURRIYET / CUMHURİYET: Heavy penalties have been given to non-commissioned officers who were being tried at Van's Third Heavy Penalty Court because of the Semdinli bombing. The jurors required the defendants to provide their last defense statements after reportedly overturning all the demands of the defendants' attorneys. The defendants have been sentenced to one year and eleven months for founding an illegal gang, to twenty-five years in prison for killing Zahir Korkmaz (in the Semdinli bombing), to twelve years in prison for attempting to kill Seferi Yilmaz (the bombed bookstore owner), and, to six months in prison for wounding Metin Korkmaz. The jurors unanimously decided to sentence the defendants to a total of thirty-nine years and five months and five days in prison. The third defendant Veysel Ates's case has been separated since Ates's attorney did not attend the hearing, and the court will give verdict about him on August 3. During the Semdinli trial yesterday, the defendants reportedly struggled to prolong the trial and delay the verdict. The defendants' attorneys claimed that the presiding judge had lost his impartiality and based such a claim on a news article Ozgur Gundem daily published before the June 19 trial day. That article was reporting as if it was definite that a verdict would come out of the third hearing, if not; it would come out of the fourth one, according to the daily. During the case the defendants' attorneys demanded the presiding judge withdraw himself from the case because of that. (This article is from 06/20 editions)

HURRIYET: Hurriyet daily points out today that Ozgur Gundem daily had reported clearly before the third (June 13) and fourth hearing (June 19) of the Semdinli case that a verdict would come out in the fourth hearing.

HURRIYET: Seferi Yilmaz, owner of the bookstore bombed on November 9, 2005 in Semdinli, has been arrested based on the statements of a PKK defector including concerns about Yilmaz. The PKK defector, Hasan Salar, surrendered to authorities a while ago and told authorities that Seferi Yilmaz had connections with senior leaders of the PKK. The juror, who decided that Yilmaz should be arrested, is the only juror in the Semdinli case who objected to the thirty-nine years and five months of prison sentence for the Semdinli defendants. That juror demanded that the defendants be sentenced to lifetime in prison two times for attempting to disrupt the unity and solidarity of the (Turkish) state and for attempting to kill people. But, the jurors unanimously decided to sentence the defendants to a total of thirty-nine years and five months and five days in prison.

OZGUR GUNDEM / EVRENSEL / ZAMAN / YENI SAFAK: Legal pundits and politicians think that the verdict given at the Semdinli trial was a positive step in the fight against illegal formations in the state structure, but was not satisfactory in the sense that it has not unveiled all alleged links in that reported illegal network and has reportedly remained within boundaries of convicting only two non-commissioned officers and has kept clear of accusing more senior officers in the military. Zaman and Yeni Safak dailies cite Joost Lagendijk, head of the Turkey-EU joint parliamentary commission, as pointing out that the verdict of the Semdinli case was an indicator of being a country observing the rule of law. Diyarbakir Bar Association Chairperson Sezgin Tanrikulu said that there had been attempts during the trial to delay the verdict by not confronting one of the defendants, who was hospitalized in a military hospital during the third and fourth hearings, with the lawsuit.

ZAMAN / YENI SAFAK: Diyarbakir chapter of HUDER (Association for Legal Research) claimed following the verdict given by the heavy penalty court in Van concerning the Semdinli case that controversial Semdinli indictment prepared by the former Prosecutor Ferhat Sarikaya, which caused Sarikaya's expulsion from his job, have proved its correct stance; therefore, the decision taken to expel Sarikaya should be revised, according to HUDER.

OZGUR GUNDEM / EVRENSEL: The U.S. has been continuing to support Turkey in its efforts to black out Roj TV broadcasts in Denmark. According to the dailies, Denmark, following the second U.S. attempt to put pressure on Denmark, has declined to discontinue Roj TV broadcasts.

OZGUR GUNDEM: During a talk on Roj TV, DTP Co-Chairperson Ahmet Turk said that the first congress of DTP to be held in

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Ankara on June 25 would constitute a new beginning and a new democratic initiative that would aim to transform the parliament into a platform for resolving issues. In a separate article, the daily cites remarks of the PKK leader Murat Karayilan about DTP. According to Karayilan, DTP must assume a role and a vision that would organize all the sections of the society to undertake strong commitments in the political arena.

OZGUR GUNDEM: PKK has reportedly revealed identities of two guerillas killed in an ambush of Iranian forces that took place on June 16 in the border area with Iran. Separately, the PKK has claimed responsibility for the bombing of a cargo train on June 17 (see press summary 06/19). PKK declined any involvement in the bomb incident that took place in Van's Baskale district on June 17.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Diyarbakir Mayor Osman Baydemir gave a statement regarding an ongoing investigation filed against him for expressing remarks allegedly praising the PKK in the days that followed the violent demonstrations in late March in Diyarbakir.

OZGUR GUNDEM: DOKH (Free Women's Democratic Movement) will hold its third conference in Istanbul July 7-9 following its second conference which was held in Batman.

OZGUR GUNDEM: Officials from Oxford University in England went to northern Iraq and reportedly discussed with local authorities the issue of opening a branch of the university in the region.

EVRENSEL: National Chairperson of Egitim-Sen (Teacher's Union) pointed out the alarming educational conditions in the eastern part of Turkey such as the grave shortage of teachers and quality education, poor classroom conditions, violence in schools, non-attendance of students to the classes due to poor economic conditions of the disadvantaged displaced families.

BOLGE / EKSPRES: BTC (Baku-Tibilisi-Ceyhan) authorities have

announced that petroleum that has traveled through the pipeline has reached the amount of 1,280,000 barrels. The first petroleum that arrived at Ceyhan on May 28 and that was loaded on "The British Hawthorne" vessel, set off for Italy on June 4. Loading of crude oil on the second vessel, Panama flagged "Tridents Hope", reportedly will start today and operations about it have been going smoothly.

YENI SAFAK: Turkey has made a last call to Russia to join the Samsun-Ceyhan pipeline project.

SABAH (GUNEY): Senior administration of one of the prominent banks of Turkey, Akbank, organized a cocktail at Hilton Hotel and came together with its clients in the region. Adana Governor Cahit Kirac, Adana Mayor Aytac Durak, Cukurova University Rector Alper Akinoglu, Adana Chamber of Commerce Chairperson Saban Bas were among the participants of the cocktail.

SABAH (GUNEY): A Turkish delegation including the Governor of Mersin went to Syria's port town Lazkiye with the newly initiated passenger ferry service between Mersin in Turkey and Lazkiye. The ferry service aims to boost tourism sector in the area.

HURRIYET (CUKUROVA): Fire broke out in a forest land in Adana's Kozan district the previous day. Efforts have been going on to prevent spreading of the fire by the wind.

RADIKAL: Turkish Armed Forces organized a press tour for members of the press to view the activities of the military units at the border areas with Syria and Iraq. A senior military official announced that 58 soldiers have died and 200 have been wounded in the 108 mine attacks in the region since June 1, 2004. In the same time period, 168 terrorists have been killed and 93 of them have been caught alive. The measures the military units took have also reportedly deterred smuggling activities.

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